

I chose to reserve my comments until I could report on the “observed” interference generated by BPL. Using my ICOM 706MKIIG and a screwdriver antenna, I “observed” the affects of BPL first hand at two locations in the Fuquay-Varina area (near Raleigh, North Carolina). This coincidentally is the same area Mr. Powell visited during his examination of the Progress Energy field trial. It is my understanding he was invited to listen to the interference firsthand, but due to time constraints was unable to do so. I submit this document for his greater edification.

While industry reports suggest that the interference from BPL is at or below the noise floor, my observations, in layman’s terms, put the interference in a range between a low drown and loud and obnoxious. The level varied with the type of distribution system used and my relative proximity to the source. Driving throughout the subdivision and surrounding area, produced measurements consistent with these findings. At times weaker amateur radio signals were totally obliterated by the BPL interference.

As I understand it, BPL employs a frequency agile design, allowing it to utilize different “swaths” of spectrum to avoid interfering with licensed services. Again through “observation” Progress Energy has attempted to reassign carriers outside frequencies licensed to the Amateur Radio Service, yet they have not been entirely successful. If I may assume Progress Energy would very much like to avoid amateur frequencies, and our complaints, I must surmise the BPL equipment used has limited ability to mitigate the interference.

Interference has now been reported in portions of the forty and eighty meter bands used for emergency communications. As the Assistant Emergency Coordinator for the North Carolina Division of Emergency Management, I would like to relate my experience during Hurricane Isabel and the role these bands played in alleviating potential suffering.

I was dispatched to assist with emergency communications in both Swan Quarter and Hertford, North Carolina, the latter being without police, fire or rescue communications due to a tower collapse. The two meters band played a major role in providing local communications with police, fire and relief efforts, but our only means of communications with the State Emergency Operations Center was through HF radio on frequencies 3923 (80 meters) & 7232 (40 meters). As a member of Army MARS, and Emergency Coordinator for Region 4, we also used frequencies in the 40 and 80 meter bands. The nature of the event presented less then ideal operating conditions. Working with induced noise and degraded receive signals, it is my belief, that the constant carrier background noise generated by BPL would have exacerbated an already tenuous situation.

I believe I have demonstrated, at least to myself that “harmful interference” does exist due to the presence of BPL, and at levels, which under FCC regulations, would preclude its deployment. As I see it, we are down to a matter of semantics. What constitutes “harmful” interference? This question may only be answered when Amateur Radio is once again called upon to serve during a disaster. My only hope is we won’t have to experience loss of life or property to make the point.

Thank You for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely;

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